

DATA & ANALYSIS

Vaccine Hesitancy Among Rural Hospitals: The Arrival of a Challenging "New Normal"

| MAY 10, 2021

<https://www.chartis.com/insights/vaccine-hesitancy-among-rural-hospitals-arrival-challenging-new-normal>

With the acceleration of accessibility to COVID-19 vaccines, vaccination rates within rural communities have emerged as a new point of emphasis. Our examination of COVID-19 vaccination rates among rural hospital healthcare professionals reveals that despite being an early cohort to have access to COVID-19 vaccines, hesitancy and resistance to vaccination is prevalent. These results are particularly worrisome as they suggest COVID-19 could linger within rural communities for the foreseeable future, stretching hospital resources and further amplifying the risk that many of the most vulnerable populations face regarding population health disparities, racial inequality, and declining access to care.

America's rural communities suffer from greater health disparities than their urban counterparts. Residents in these communities are older, less healthy, and more likely to lack health insurance. They also face declining access to care as the nation's rural health crisis has shuttered 136 rural hospitals and left another 453 vulnerable to closure. These disparities and a weakened rural health safety net place rural Americans at an increased risk for acute symptoms and illness due to COVID-19.

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